
Mr. Woodward's SERMON

before the

Lord-Mayor,

On the

Fast-Day, *June the 19th, 1695.*

Lane Mayor.

*Jovis 20 die Junij, 1695.
Annoq; Dom. Reg. Gulielmi
tertij Ang. &c. Septimo.*

T*His Court doth desire Mr. Woodward to Print his Sermon Preached yesterday at the Parish-Church of St. Mary Le Bow, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens of this City.*

Goodfellow.

SERMON

Preached before

The Right Honourable the
Lord-Mayor,

AND

A L D E R M E N

OF THE

City of London,

At St. *Mary Le BOW*;

On *Wednesday* the 19th of *June*, 1695. A Day appointed for a Solemn Fast, for Supplicating Almighty God for the Pardon of our Sins; and imploring his Protection of His Majestie's Person, and the Prosperity of His Arms by Sea and Land. By Order of the Lords Justices.

By *Josiah Woodward*, Minister of *Poplar*.

LONDON, Printed for *Ralph Simpson* at the *Harp* in
St. *Paul's* Church-yard, 1695.

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TO THE
Right Honourable
Sir **Thomas Lane,**
Lord Mayor of the City of London,
AND THE
Court of ALDERMEN.

My Lord,

 *SINCE nothing in the following Discourse can be supposed to have recommended it to the Hearers, but those serious and seasonable Truths, whereby it recommends it self to every Man's Conscience. It must be look'd on as a Specimen of your Lordship's and your Worshipful Brethren's Integrity towards God, and Fidelity to the present Government (in a time when some so easily shake hands with both together.) That you desire to review what was humbly offered upon our late Fast-Day, on these two Topicks (of Duty to God and the King;) which the Nature of the Things, and*

*

the

The Dedication.

the Duty of the Day entwisted together. And may these Heaven-born Twinns never be devided upon Earth: For indeed; they are but half-Friends (if we may not call them Enemies) to any Civil Government, who are impatient of the Government of God; by whose Blessing alone Kingdoms Flourish. The sins of such Persons hurt the side they take, more than their Assistance helps it.

And therefore, when all is done; unfeigned Holiness (how lightly soever esteemed in these filthy dreggs of time) is surely the most Honourable and useful accomplishment of Humane Nature. The real Servant of God is the true Person of Quality, being one of the Household of God. And till any Empire can be found equal to that of God; no Title or Employment can be of equivalent Honour to that of belonging to the Court of Heaven.

Yet we see, the World laughs at this. And according to the Notions of some, there is Glory in the service of the Devil. And the most like him in Pride, Falschood, Revenge, and Blasphemy are the finest Men. But, are not these very horrible and very perverse Sentiments? Has Bedlam it self any such reverse to common sense, as this? And will not insupportable shame succeed this Phrenzy, when once they come to see things in a true light? And this

The Dedication.

this they will see to the purpose, within a little while, either in their Conversion or Condemnation. God Almighty grant it them in the first Method, not in the last.

It is not more evident that the Sun guilds and cheers this lower World, than that Religion is the Light, Glory, and Advancement of the Intellectual part of it. Happy are its Votaries, yea blessed are its very Martyrs. It is a very light thing to bear the mockery and Affronts of this World, if we do but pass on directly to the Glory of the other. Those that are blind will be apt to jostle those they meet in the streets: But it is the Duty of such as see, to endeavour to put them into the right way.

And therefore, there is no Post beneath the Clouds so honourable, as that of a Person in great Power, employing it to reclaim and reform the Community to which it belongs. It is like the Good Angel's leading Lot and his Family out of the reach of the descending Flames. The comforts of which here is almost as inexpressible as it's Reward hereafter.

Upon the whole, if there be any such Great and Blessed Man (or set of Men) upon Earth: by whose Piety, Prudence, and Power (under God) Christianity is to retrieve its Credit, and God his Honour in the World. Blessed is He (or They)
above

The Dedication.

above the common rate of Mortals! All the sober part of Mankind will kiss their feet, and the most remote Posterity will bless their Memory.

I confide, My Lord, That your just indignation to the wretched Atheism of this prophane Age, will incline your Lordship to excuse the Prolixity of this Address to you; to which I shall now put a speedy Period, so soon as I have implored this one mercy of God, viz. That your Lordship and your Worshipful Brethren, may by your pious and prudent Conduct, establish the Peace, restore the Piety, and advance the Prosperity and Renown of this Great and Famous City: And hereby ascertain to your selves abiding Mansions in that City which has Divine Foundations: which is the unfeigned Desire of

My Lord,

your Lordship's

very Respectful

Humble Servant,

Josbiab Woodward.

* his C^o was a vain
ignorant insipid
party - Tool.

Deut. IX. 26

I Prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not thy People, and thine Inheritance, which thou hast redeemed thro' thy greatness: which thou hast brought forth of Egypt with a mighty hand.

THE Solemn Duty of every Soul of us this Day (but more especially of all *Publick Persons*) is the same with that of *Moses* in the Text, viz: Humbly to importune our offended God, for mercy to a sinful People. And this, in the method of *Fasting and Prayer*, as *Moses* here did. Yea, the Parallel runs further in that about the same time the Armies of *Israel* were to Attack their Enemies in their Entranchments and Fortified Cities, as we read at the beginning of this Chapter. *Hear, O Israel, thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in, to possess Nations greater and mightier*

mightier than thy self: Cities great and fenced up to Heaven, v. 1. i. e. Very strongly Fortified, so as to be impregnable by any Forces but such as were led on by the *Lord of Hosts*. And therefore he takes this occasion to shew them the absolute necessity of making their peace with God, and securing his powerful Alliance. And may we (in a like juncture) prudently take the Hint.

But here the Parallel discontinues; viz. In that *Moses* here had but one single Enormity of *Israel* (tho' a very great one) to lament before God: and that too, was happily nipt in the bud, by an *impartial execution of Justice on the known Offenders*, *Exod. 32. 27.* But our Sins, alas! are prodigiously many as well as great: And these too are fatally ripen'd by long indulgence and impunity. So that our Breach is very wide, and we need many such as *Moses* to stand in the Gap and fill it up, which I pray God raise up to us in this important Juncture, in which the very Being of our Church and Nation lies at stake. May the good God pour out a *Spirit of Conviction and Supplication* on us, that every Soul this day may put it self out to the utmost in the proper work of it: i. e. Humiliation and Prayer. And blessed be God who giveth us this day another

that season of intercession for mercy, before the final execution of his vengeance. For, it is infinite mercy alone that has suspended our Destruction thus long, when our sins have *so long and so loudly cry'd for it.* And surely this suspension of God's wrath gives us room to hope, that it is the *waiting of his Goodness to be gracious to us.* We trust that the door of Divine Mercy is not yet nailed up against us, by such a severe Decree as that which is thrice mention'd (*Ezek. 14. v. 14, 18, 20.*) that tho' those three Favourites of Heaven, *Noah, Daniel, and Job* stood up in the behalf of that People, they could not turn away God's wrath from them.

Let us therefore *cry mightily to God* this Day, humbly pouring out our melted Souls before him, according to the *Example of Moses* in the Text. And God Almighty grant that our Prayers may find the same acceptance as that of *Moses* did. To this end, let us pray with his *Fervency, and Integrity*; and say, *O Lord God, destroy not thy People and thine Inheritance which thou hast redeemed thro' thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth of Egypt with a mighty hand.*

This Book of *Deuteronomy* is a brief Rehearsal of the most *Memorable Passages* which occur'd to the People of *Israel* under the Conduct of *Moses*;

Moses with very *suitable* and *serious* applications all along.

The Text touches upon their great Transgression in the matter of the *Golden Calf*, a Sin of very great provocation, and had been of as dismal Consequence, had not *Moses* with the deepest humiliation, and earnestness, like that of *Wrestling Jacob*, cry'd and interceded for them, as in the Text, *I Prayed therefore unto the Lord, &c.*

In which words, these two Observations are obvious to every considerate Mind, *viz.*

I. That times of great provocation should be to all the Faithful Servants of God, a season of earnest and extraordinary intercession with him: *Israel* falls to Idolatry and Profaneness: and *Moses* throws himself down before the Lord, to assuage his Wrath, and solicit his mercy. *I prayed therefore unto the Lord, &c.*

II. That a People's profession of the true Religion, and being those which God has signally delivered and defended in times past, may make an humble Plea with God for farther Deliverance. *Destroy not thy People and thine Inheritance which thou hast redeemed thro' thy greatness, &c.*

I. In the first place, let us take notice, That times of great wickedness and provocation should

be

be a season for good People's earnest and assiduous Intercession with God. The greater the sin of *Israel* was, the longer and the more earnestly did *Moses* cry to God for Mercy towards them.

A People are not in the last extremity, whilst they have a *Moses* left among them. A Righteous and Zealous Intercessor stands a People in great stead in time of Wrath. Insomuch that when God fully determines to destroy any People, he first stops the mouths of Intercessors. As (*Jer. 7. 16.*) *Pray not thou for this People, neither lift up Cry nor Prayer for them, neither make intercession for them, for I will not hear thee.* And in this very case of the *Golden Calf*, tho' at the first there seem'd little hope of obtaining mercy with God, when he said in his anger to *Moses*, *Let me alone that I may consume them*, *Exod. 32. 10.* Yet after *Moses's* humble and earnest Prayer in the Text, it had this effect: *That the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his People*, *Exod. 32. 14.* Yet they were not to come off clear, without many a blow of Correction for this Fault, as they were told, (*v. 34.*) *Nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.* When God took up the Rod to lash them on other occasions, he gave them a blow or two the more for this, which

the *Jews* knew very well; insomuch that in most of their Sufferings afterwards, they used to say, *that there was a hair of the Golden Calf in them.* But still it was the Chyrurgeons Launce, not the Executioner's Ax. And this was happily procured by means of *Moses's* Intercession: And that in this method.

1. He falls down before the Lord.
2. He Fasts Forty days and Forty nights.
3. He Prays with great Fervour, and a sort of undeniable urgency for the Publick Good.

First, He falls down before the Lord. This is twice mentioned in the verse before the Text, v. 25. By which must be meant, either that he fell down on his Knees, or more probably on his Face before the Lord: as he did (*Numb. 16. 22.*) And as our blessed Saviour himself did (*Mat. 26. 39.*) Which shews us, that reverence of bodily gesture is very requisite in the solemn Worship of God. Methinks I cannot imagine how any sober Person can think otherwise, or chuse to do otherwise. Our Bodies are an Essential part of our selves, and we expect to be glorified in them as well as in our Souls; and therefore we ought to glorifie God in our Souls and in our Bodies which are his, *1 Cor. 6. 20.* We must indeed first and principally look to the Composure and Frame of our Hearts:

Hearts : And then (where no impediment prevents us) we ought to dispose our Bodies too into a very reverend and humble posture, that one part of us may not seem to disallow and undo that which the other is doing.

2. *Moses* Fasts Forty Days and Forty Nights, being miraculously supported; for he kept a very strict Fast, as he describes it (*z. 18.*) *I did neither eat bread nor drink water*, being earnestly intent on the work in hand. Now, tho' we cannot imitate this for so many days, yet methinks such as are healthy may well bear it for one day. Not that there is any Spiritual Holiness in the bare Act of Fasting any more than in Eating; but that it better conduces to the proper work of a day of Humiliation, and is indeed a natural expression of self-aborrancy, and of the inward bitterness and affliction of the Soul. If we have lost a dear Relation, *we forget to eat our bread*, and all our usual refreshments are insipid to us: And surely it cannot be otherwise, when we are duly convinc'd, that by our wickedness we are like to sin away our God, our Mercies, our Eternal Bliss. The Prophet speaking of the sorrow of Penitents, says, *They shall mourn as one that mourneth for his only Son: and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born*, Zech. 12. 10.

This,

This, this, my Brethren, is our proper Behaviour this day. We are to lament *crying Sins*, and *departing Mercies*, yea, I fear, a *departing God*. Let this engage our hearts in a more conscientious discharge of the duties of this day than is usual. As for such as give their minds to business or vanity in the Mornings of our *Fast-days*, and after this come coldly and unaffectedly to the publick Service of God, and thence return to their usual meals, and spend the rest of the day as impertinently (shall I say? or rather as provokingly) as this; I cannot but ask them in the words of the Prophet (*Isa. 58. 5.*) *Is this the Fast which God has chosen?* Wilt thou call such idleness as this *an acceptable day to the Lord*? Alas! what wretched notions hast thou of the Great God? if thou thinkest him pleased with the skin of a Sacrifice? What sense of his Glorious Majesty? His Spiritual and Holy Nature? His Infinite Glory and Ubiquity? If thou settest so light by his Service and Presence?

If any one had greatly offended you, and came to you to ask your pardon, and to lament his fault; should he now come sneering and laughing into your presence, and presently set him down on his Seat, and talk of something else, and do nothing but toy and trifle whilst he is with you, would

would you not say, this Fellow came hither on purpose to *mock me and defie me*? I am more offended by his *sham-repentance*, than by his *first fault*. But, alas! what is a slight done to us poor sinful Dast, if compared to mockery done to the Almighty God? Ah, Sirs! *be not deceived, God will not (cannot) be mock'd*, Gal. 6. 7. Our formal and ineffectual Fasts do rather kindle God's wrath than encline his mercy. Fasts, did I say? the common observance of these days by some People deserves not that name. There's not so much as the likeness and outward appearance of a Fast in many places. The same concourse in the Streets, the same throng in Publick Houses, and diversion in the Fields; the same Ornaments, and Meals, and Mirth as on other days; and the same idleness and indevotion. Oh! that I could awaken the *drouzy Consciences* of these People, or at least their *care of decency*; for the common abuses of these Solemn Days are to be abhor'd and hiss'd at, by all that have any sense of Religion, or indeed any due regard to *Civil decorum*. The Fasts of *Jews and Turks* are grave, severe, and devout Solemnities, and shall the Fasts of *Christians* be trifling, vain, and unsincere? God forbid.

Let us then seek the Lord this day with all our Soul, and this in a serious, contrite, and self-abasing

abasing manner: which leads me to the third thing remarkable in the behaviour of *Moses* on this occasion, *viz.*

3. He Prays with great fervour, and with a sort of undeniable urgency for the publick good, "I Prayed therefore unto the Lord and said, "Oh Lord God, destroy not thy People, and "thine Inheritance, &c. As if he said, let not "thy wrath, good God, consume that Peo- "ple which has the Divine honour to be called "thine, and to bear thy Name. They are the "peculiar People, for whose sake thou hast "wrought such glorious Miracles; such "as no People but they were ever favoured "withall. This is that People which thy good- "ness redeemed from the slavery of *Egypt*, in "which Deliverance thou didst make bare thine "Almighty Arm. And now, O Lord, shall thy "vengeance cut down those whom thy mercy has "so lately raised up? Wilt thou destroy those "in the *Wilderness*, for whom thou shewedst "such tenderness in *Egypt*? Will not the *Hea- "then* blaspheme thy name, and the *Egyptians* "triumph, when they shall hear of this? and "say, that thou destroyedst this People because "thou couldst not perform thy Promises made "to them. Permit, O Mighty *Jehovah*, I pray "thee

' thee, permit a poor sinful worm to lay this
 " humble Expostulation at the Footstool of thy
 ' Mercy Seat : Not to instruct my *Maker* (who
 " knoweth all things) but to express my earnest
 " zeal for the *glory* of thy Name, and the *good* of
 " thy People.

This is the Scope of this Pious Man's Prayer
 in the Text, which was not put up in vain: For
 it averted imminent wrath, and obtained season-
 able Mercy. Now, as the Example of *Elijah's*
Prayer (by which the Heavens were opened and
 shut) is proposed to us for our encouragement
 by the *Holy Ghost* (Jam. 5. 17.) so may we here
 enliven both our Affections and our Hopes from
 the Example of *praying and prevailing Moses* in
 the Text. Days of Fasting ought to be days of
 extraordinary Prayer and Intercession. A real
 Christian cannot do otherwise, his concern for
 the honour of God is mightily row'd up by the
 perfidiousness and Apostacy of others. And on
 this occasion, *Zeal* for God, *Compassion* to Men,
 and *Indignation* against Sin, will make him put
 himself out to the utmost. As when a Valiant
Heroick General sees some of his *Troops* quitting
 their station, and fleeing in Battle: He bravely
 opposes the retiring Crowd, throws himself into
 the chiefest place of danger, and valiantly de-
 fends

sends that ground which others had basely quitted. And thus sometimes the single valour of one *brave Commander* wins the day.

Thus seasonably did *Moses* step in to the succour of the People of *Israel*, when otherwise the breach of their integrity (like a breach made in the ranks of an Army) had opened a passage to the consuming wrath of God amongst them. And by this *Moses* is said to *stand up in the breach*, without which *they had been destroyed*, *Psal* 106. 23. and this *Moses* did very often. For,

When *Corah* and *his Accomplices* had generally misled the People into an execrable Sedition. And for this, God had kindled a dreadful Plague among them: With what earnestness did this good man direct *Aaron* to make a speedy attonement for them! *Take a Censer* (says he) *and put fire therein from off the Altar, and put on Incense, and go quickly into the Congregation, and make attonement for them, for the Plague is begun.* *Numb.* 16. 46. And this *Aaron* did (whilst *Moses* lay on his face v. 22.) seeking mercy for them and so these two pious Intercessors stood as a Bulwark betwixt the dead and the living, and stop'd the progress of God's wrath for that time also. But this powerful intercession of *Moses* never was so clearly seen as in the *Battel with Amalek*,

Amalek, Exod. 17. 11. where *Moses* no sooner *sunk his devout hands*, but the *Victory of Israel declined*, with them, and fell to the other side, as if the *Victory and power of Israel* had been chain'd to his arm; by which it pleased God to give them a demonstration of what importance the prayers of this one *eminent Servant* of his was to them.

Thus did *Joshua* and the *Elders of Israel*, when their Forces had been discomfited before the People of *Ai*. *They rent their cloaths, and fell on their faces to the earth, and put dust upon their heads, and prayed earnestly to the Lord, and obtained favour in his sight, Josh. 2. 6.* Thus did *Abraham, Samuel, Jehosaphat, Josiah, Ezra, Daniel*, and all the *eminent Servants of God* in all Ages, whose devout prayers have frequently scattered those black Clouds which the common guilt had raised, which otherwise had lain in a dreadful storm upon their heads.

Oh! that this throng of *Holy Precedents* might be effectual to excite our most elevated Devotions this day. Let us indeed afflict our Souls before the All-seeing God; lest our *mock-Fasts* make work for *real ones*; and lest we hasten that wrath which we seem to deprecate. Let us indeed do the needful work of *Intercessors* with
 E God;

God; and that we may not want Arguments to plead for mercy, the latter part of my Text will suggest something apposite to our Case, which is summed up in my second observation, viz.

That a *Peoples* profession of the *true Religion*, and being those whom God had signally *delivered* and defended in times past, may be humbly pleaded with God as an argument for further *Deliverance*. For thus Moses prays and pleads in the Text. *O Lord, destroy not thy People and thine Inheritance which thou hast redeemed thro thy Greatness, which thou hast brought forth of the Land of Egypt with a mighty hand.* In which he seems to argue thus. "Oh Lord, may
 "it please thee to make the procedure of thy *Pro-*
 "vidence towards this *People* suitable to what it
 "has been hitherto. Thou hast hitherto pre-
 "served and defended them by *astonishing dispen-*
 "sations. We can never forget that dreadful
 "succession of *miraculous Plagues* which thou
 "broughtest upon our *Enemies the Egyptians*:
 "How grossly thou didst infatuate them, and how
 "eminently thou didst inspire us, and by what
 "a wonderful Revolution thou wast pleased to
 "free us from their slavery. Oh Let us not now
 "perish by that *powerful hand* by which we were
 "so

“so lately delivered. 'Tis true, we are guilty
 “of great provocations, but thy *mercy* is greater
 “than our perverseness. Oh spare a very sinful
 “*People* for thine infinite *mercy* sake. Lest when
 “the *Egyptians* hear of our destruction, they
 “triumph in our ruine in the *Wilderness* as much
 “as we did in the destruction of the *Egyptians* in
 “the *Red Sea*. Yea, lest they think thy power
 “oftner displayed in *Judgment* than in *Mercy*.

This is the purport of the Plea in my *Text*, which may be reduced to these four Particulars.

I. He pleads for mercy for them, on the account of their relation to God, as they were his People; *Destroy not thy People and thine Inheritance.*

They were a *peculiar People* by a very singular and selecting love of God, *Deut. 4. 43. Hath God essayed to go and take him a Nation from the midst of another Nation, by Signs, Wonders, and by a mighty hand, as the Lord your God did you, &c.* So that now the honour of God seemed to be concerned for their preservation.

Now, all that profess the incorrupt *Religion* of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, may form an Argument somewhat like this, and say, “Lord, we are
 “*Christians*, we cleave to the *Doctrine* of thy Be-
 “loved Son, for his sake, whose Name we bear,
 “and for the honour of thy *visible Church* on
 “*Earth*, destroy us not. And, tho’ (alas!) too
 “too

" too few of us are duly influenced by our *holy*
 " *Faith*, yet we generally avow thee, thee alone
 " to be our God, in opposition to *Idols and other*
 " *Gods*.

Oh that we could say we are *Christians* in opposition to *Hypocrisie and Prophaneſs* too, then our plea would be irresistibile.

II. There may be a further plea inferr'd from *Moses his Prayer* thus, viz. For as much as there s seldom the profession of the true *Religion* without some hearty and entire embracers of it. So that an Argument may be made like that of *Abraham's*, Gen. 18. 24. *If there be Fifty, or Forty, or but Ten Righteous Persons*, wilt thou not spare the corrupt generality for the sake of this little found part? This, we have great hope, may be pleaded in the behalf of *this Nation*, yea of *this City*. Even in a far greater Number than that which *Abraham* began his Plea with. But truly the number of the Good is too too small: And indeed, *except the Lord had left unto us, this small Remnant, we had been altogether as Sodom and like unto Gomorrah*, Isa. 1. 9. But we trust we shall fare the better for the sake of these.

III. Another part of *Moses's Plea* is grounded on the past Mercies which God had vouchsaf'd to this People. *This is the People* (says he) *which*

which thou hast redeemed thro' thy greatness, and brought out of Egypt with thy mighty hand.

In this respect also some Plea may be made for England. It is a Land which God has by a Series of Wonders freed from the Slavery and Corruptions of Popery. An infinite Blessing which we have now enjoy'd for almost two Centuries of Years. And tho' there have been many Combinations and restless Plottings against us; yet, blessed be God, they have hitherto proved abortive. And we are at this day (thro' infinite mercy) a Free People, enjoying the blessed Beams of the Gospel, and the Just and Antient Rights of our Mother-Country.

O! may that Bountiful God who has hitherto thus seasonably, thus marvelously appeared for us, still be our Guardian. May his infinite Goodness never leave us, but flow down with the same exuberant Streams on us, and our Posterity to the latest Generations. So that we may here say as Solomon; *The Lord our God be with us as He was with our Fathers; let him not leave us nor forsake us,* 1 Kings 8. 57.

IV. Another part of Moses his Plea is taken from the Infotence of the Enemy, ver. 28. *Left the Land whence thou broughtest us out, say; Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the*

Land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the Wilderness. The World is apt to judge of the goodness of the Cause by its success, and to make very wild Interpretations of the *Language of Providence*. Wicked men are apt to conclude that God is on their side, when their Mischievous Designs take effect. So that on this account also we may form a Plea for Mercy: For, if *Protestants* be consumed, the *Papists* will be sure to glory in their Ruine, as in the Fall of *Miscreant Hereticks*: Especially, since their *Cardinal Champion* makes *outward Prosperity and Victory* the mark of his splendid *Church* *.

* *Ultima Nota est felicitas temporalis, Divinitus ijs collata qui Ecclesiam defenderunt.* Bellarmin de Notis Ecclesiz, cap. 18.

Which, by his leave, would better have fitted the mouth of a *Turk* than a *Christian*. For, *Mahomet* proposed to propagate his Faith by the Sword, which our *Blessed Saviour* never did, but the very contrary.

Now therefore, since the *French Papists* have so glutted themselves already with the groans and blood of the *Protestants* in their own Country; should their bloody Designs against us prosper too, how would they blaspheme the *Reformed Religion*, and triumph in their own *Delusions*? May the *Lord of Armies* therefore enable

feeble the Power, and blast the Designs of those *Massacring Legions*. And if our sins are so ripe, that *Infinite Justice* can spare us no longer, nor *infinite patience* any longer suspend our punishment, may we fall into the hands of God rather than Men. Rather the *Pestilence*, or *Scarcity*, or any earthly *Plague*; 2 Sam. 24. 14. (as David once chose) than fall into the hands of *bloody bigotted Papists*, their very *mercies* are bitterly cruel, like *Belzebub* himself, they mock while they torment. For, whilst they are racking our Bodies with exquisite tortures, they pretend it to be a high piece of *Charity* to our Souls. 'Tis this makes the *French* say, that they have treated their *Countrymen* of the *Reformed Religion* with great kindness, and that there has been no *Persecution* amongst them: tho' they have exercised them with all the trying and tedious methods of *Cruelty* that their *Dragoons* (assisted by *infernal malice*) could invent, or execute.

Should the Friends of the *French Interest* here but taste a few drops of this *bitter Cup* (after which they seem to long; and could they drink it alone, none would grudge it them) it would soon cool their unreasonable passion for it. For, till *Popery* can entirely destroy our Reason, and bewitch our senses (as it pretends to do) we cannot

not but account *Romish Darknes* and *Romish Slavery* the very quintessence of the *Egyptian Plagues*, and the most comprehensive miseries above Hell. For they contain most of the *Plagues* of this Life, both Temporal and Spiritual, with an execrable tendency to the remediless *Torments* of the Life to come.

Now therefore, as the *Jews* met with many Deliverances, meerly to keep their *Adversaries* from vaunting, may it please God to vouchsafe us the same mercy on the same account.

But still I desire you to take notice, that tho' these four *Pleas* now mentioned, are Arguments against our utter destruction, yet they are no *Pleas* against our temporal Correction and Calamities. But rather indeed, the abuses of our singular Mercies and Priviledges, do not only plead but cry for our punishment, even before others, as 'tis said, *Amos 3. 2. You only have I known of all the Families upon Earth, therefore I will punish you for all your Iniquities.*

And indeed when I consider what a Favourite People the *Jews* once were, and by what a dreadful destruction they were cut off at the last. I am sure Favourite *England* has reason to look about her. The rather alas! in that by the Death of our late most Excellent *Queen* (of whom
the

the World was not worthy) God seems to have *made a way to his anger*: by removing that *extraordinary Princess* out of the Nation, he has taken up one chief *Barrier* of his wrath. I cannot but look on this as the most *angry Blow* that ever I knew given to these *Three Nations*, and perhaps to many more. Let us then turn immediately and unfeignedly to him that hath smitten us, whilst our wounds are capable of being healed. A little longer continuance in sin may make our ruine inevitable. *As Judah sinned till there was no remedy*, 2 Chron 36. 16.

Thus having consider'd the parts of my Text in a practical manner all along: I shall now only lay a few Inferences before you suitable to the whole, and so conclude.

I. *Inf.* As we expect a stable and settled Prosperity and Peace, we must be heartily and steddily religious. If we were in truth *God's People*, we should be *his Inheritance*, which he would defend against all Invaders. But if we are but *superficial Christians*, we can have but an *imaginary happiness*. For, if Vice raves as it has done: If Blasphemy and Villany triumph: If every day produces new Oaths, and new Methods of Lust: And if the Ways of *God* are exploded, and Truth, and Integrity fails from among the Children of Men, alas! what woe, what misery awaits us?

Let us therefore look that our *Reformed Religion* may have reformed *Votaries*: and that our *Lives* become the visible Transcript of our Sacred and *undefiled Faith*. Then shall we prosper and flourish indeed, and be truly and sted-dily great, and not till then.

II *Inf* See we, who are Enemies to a Nations Peace and Prosperity, and who are worthy to feel the sharpness of the *Magistrates Sword*, viz. Such as offend the God of all Victory and Blessedness. *Achan's Sins* did more mischief to *Israel* in the Camp, than all their *Army* could do good. And if we grant, that there is the same *all-govern-ing God* in Heaven, we must needs perceive our selves in danger of being blasted from the same Cause? or rather, *are we not blasted already?* yet *who lays it to heart?* Did the most Aged of us ever before know *Earthquakes* so frequent, *Sea-storms* so fatal, and *Wars* so universal, and of so long continuance? Yet *who amongst us turns to him that smiteth us?* But on the contrary, is not the Name of the *Great and Terrible God* more *prophane-d than ever?* Are not the *Prayers* of a few *Devout Persons* in this Land countermined by the volleys of *Oaths* and *Curses* of innumerable *Blas-phemeis*? Are not our ears filled with the *hideous imprecations of Damnation*, as we pass the streets?

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This is surely the most *monstrous sin* that ever the Earth bore. God has been dishonoured in all Ages, but he was never so *dared and challenged* as he is in this.

For shame, cease your blaspheming Insults, ye Monsters of Iniquity! Know assuredly that *your Damnation lingers not*, ye need not hasten it. The streams of flaming Brimstone will fill your mouths soon enough, ye need not call to your *fudge* to make speed with his work. But it behoves you rather to fall on your knees, and unsay what you have said; for your Curses will otherwise be *poured like burning Oyle into your Bones*, Psal. 109. 18.

We have all of us reason to oppose you in this; for, *by reason of your Swearing the Land mourns*, Jer. 23. 10.

But in this our *mournful Case*, 'tis not a little comfortable to us; That the Supream Authority has testified its dislike of *Prophane Swearing and Cursing* by a *new Law to punish it*. And may we all in our stations acquit our Consciences in furthering the just execution of it. For, as this is the most common and most defenseless sin, it deserves to fall in the first place, as a *Presage* (we hope) of the Fall of all other Enormities after it.

As many as are habitual Swearers. This

This minds us of *zealous Moses* again; the *Example* I have proposed all along. We must now consider him as a *Chief Magistrate*, and we see with what impartiality he executed Justice on such as offended in matter of the *Golden-Calf*, to which the Text relates. For *he regarded neither Relation nor Friend*, but (by his Officers) slew all that were convicted of it, to the number of *three thousand Persons*, *Exod. 32. 28.* and then *God was entreated* for the rest.

I therefore turn me with due respect to the *Worshipful Magistrates* of this Great City. *Gentlemen*, I speak in *the Name of the Great God* to you, of a thing, in which his honour and the common good is greatly concerned. As *God* has put his *Sword* into your hands for *the punishment of Wickedness* and Vice, and the protection of Vertue and Innocence, even so draw it forth effectually for *the Lord's sake*. Oh! what a Field of Honour lies before you! you may do more for the glory of God, by one exemplary Punishment of Prophaneness than we can by a Volume of Sermons against it. Many Persons have sin'd themselves to an utter obduracy in Spiritual things, they are insensible of reproof, their *Faith is dead*, and their *Conscience seared*: But their Senses are alive, and 'tis you only that
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can touch them in their most sensible Parts, their *Bodies* and their *Purses*: Oh! make these Rampant Sinners know, that you *hold not the Sword of Magistracy in vain*. Can it be any longer endured, that Women (to whom it would be shame enough to be solicited) should solicit Men to Uncleaness in the open Streets, even before the Noon-day Sun? Can we longer bear the Wounds which *Blasphemy* and *Obscenity* make in our Ears as we pass along? Is it not time that those vain People be undeceiv'd, who think themselves advanced in *Greatness and Gentility* by the height of their Vices?

Oh! what can be more Divinely-Honourable, and more absolutely necessary, than to fix resolutely on the *Reformation* of these crying Enormities, which would at once advance the Honour of God, retrieve the Reputation of Religion, dispel the Causes of our Ruine in Church and State, settle the peace of our Consciences, and tend to our everlasting happiness?

Reformation is a Work so Divine, so Glorious, so Blessed, that were it the work of the Saints above (as it is of those below) we might well think that *Moses* would gladly come down from the *Heavenly Mount Zion*, as he did from the Mount in the Context, to bring Men to a bet-

ter acquaintance with the ways of God. But we are told from Heaven that a *Man arising from the Dead* is no proper Instrument to reclaim Sinners. The Answer is, *they have Moses and the Prophets already*, Luke 16. 29. We have indeed their Writings, Oh! that we had their Spirit too, or rather a *double Portion of it*, to check the inveterate Prophaneness of the Aged World. For, I take it to be an unquestionable Truth, and I pray God fix it deeply in our Minds and Hearts: That *there is no more hope of our solid Prosperity, than there is of our real Reformation*. It was never yet known, that *such mercies* as we enjoy, and *such sins* as we commit, continued long together.

III *Inf.* Lastly, we may hence discover one Reason of the slowness of our success against the *common Enemy*, viz. Our unfitness for such a Mercy. Were our Enemies entirely subdued, we might probably grow worse; For, *our Mercies have hitherto-ripped our Sins*, and therefore (till we are better disposed for *Deliverance and Victory*,) mercy it self cannot but keep it from us; or dispense it (as a *Physician* does flesh-meat to a crazy Constitution) very rarely, and in small Portions. So that the Divine Goodness may be supposed to sigh over us, as once over
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Israel, and say: *Oh that my People had hearkned unto me! that Israel had walk'd in my ways, I should soon have subdued their Enemies, and turned my hand against their Adversaries.* Psal. 81.13. So that we here see, the readiest way to make a *speedy end of our long War.*

We see then, my beloved Brethren, wherein lyeth our direct and only Path to the Temporal Prosperity of our Nation, as well as the Eternal happiness of our Souls: Namely, in a general and unfeigned return to God, in true Repentance for past Sins, and in casting away from us that Prophaneness, Bitterness, Division, and Hypocrisie, whereby God has been so long offended and dishonoured, serving the Lord with *servency of Spirit in newness of Life* for the time to come. For it is impossible that we should be happy here or hereafter without the Favour and Blessing of God: And it is also impossible to attain the Favour of God whilst we continue in our Impieties. *Why should we then any longer delay to keep God's Commandments?*

But you'll say perhaps, This is that we are doing this Day. The whole Nation is required to be at their Prayers this Day, and to humble themselves before our offended God, and seek his Favour. In a General Fast, every one

one is (in some sense) to *gird himself with Sackcloth, and lie in the Dust*; and repent and reform, in order to purge away the National Guilt.

To this I Answer; Oh! that it were so indeed; I wish with all the Concern I am able, that there were such a General Repentance this Day amongst us, as we extremely need, even to the last necessity. But ah! may it not here be reply'd, as *Samuel* once did, to convince a pretended Picty of real Iniquity, (1 Sam. 15. 14.) *What meaneth then this bleating of the Sheep in mine Ears; and the lowing of Oxen which I hear?*

Thus as to our Case, What meaneth the rattling of idle Coaches in our Ears, and the trappings of the Horses of such as ride abroad to divert themselves? What means the noise of Business, and Vanity, yea of Lewdness in the Streets? Do the open preparations in the Butcher's, and Cook's Shops, denote the self denial of a Fast, or the Entertainment of a Festival? Do the Modern garish Dresses bear any resemblance to the *Scriptural Sackcloth*? Yea, do not some amongst us mock our Fasts, and defame the Observers of them? And alas! may it not hence be feared (or rather concluded) with too great reason, that a sort of
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Perverſe Spirit is fallen upon us , like that of the *Jews*, a little before their Captivity, which is deſcribed (*Iſa. 22. 12, 13.*) *In that day did the Lord God of Hoſts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldneſs, and to girding with Sackcloth, (i. e. to the moſt ſolemn and ſevere humiliation and ſelf-abasement :) And behold Joy and Gladneſs, ſlaying of Oxen, and killing of Sheep ; eating of Fleſh and drinking of Wine : Let us eat and drink for to morrow we ſhall dye.* Here was a perfect Scheme of Epicuriſm, in times when God called both by his Prophets and Providences to bitter mourning, and ſorrow of Heart. And therefore, what Ear can without tingling, hear that which follows in that Propheſie ? Or what Heart can without trembling and terror conſider it ? (verſ. 14.) *And it was revealed in mine Ears by the Lord of Hoſts, (the God whom they mockt, and whoſe Calls they deſpiſed,) Surely this Iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till ye die, i. e. this Daring, Mocking Obſtinacy of yours, will and ſhall be your Deſtruction.*

Oh ! may no ſhare of this Guilt, no ſpark of this Wrath, befall us or our Nation. May we all be numbered amongſt thoſe that *mourn now* in hope of the promiſed Conſolation, (*Luk. 6. 21.*) rather than after a little empty and unſeaſonable merriment, go down to the place of *Everlaſting Weeping and Wail-*

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ing, (verſ. 25.) Be we aſſured that God obſerves the Frame of every one of our Souls this day ; and will perhaps ſignalize the ſecret Mourner for publick Sins, by a peculiar exemption in the Day of Calamity, as it was in a like Caſe, (Ezek. 9. 4.) *And the Lord ſaid unto him, go thorow the miſt of the City, thorow the miſt of Jeruſalem, and ſet a Mark upon the Foreheads of the Men that ſigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the miſt thereof. And this Mark was to be to them a note of Divine Protection from the Beſom of Deſtruction whereby others were ſwept away : Juſt as the Blood of the Paſcal Lamb on the Door-poſts of the Iſraelites, was their ſecurity from that Plague whereby the Firſt-born of the Egyptians were deſtroy'd.*

But as for ſuch who never yet kept a Faſt in that contrite, humble and affecting manner which is required by God : But deal by this, as by all other parts of Religion. If a little formal and lifeleſs obſervance of it will ſerve the turn, they will be for it as loudly as any : But more than this is over-doing with them. Theſe, I ſay, do rather cumber the Work of this day than forward it. They deny God their Heart, and therefore give him nothing. And as Religion has no Hold of them, ſo they can have no Benefit from it. They are for a Religion
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that will cost them nothing, but this will appear a Religion which they can get nothing by.

May we then from this day forward turn to the Lord our God with all our Heart, and serve Him with all our might. That it may be said of this Fast of ours, as it was of that Effectual *Fast of Nineve* (Jon. 3. 10.) *And God saw their Works, that they turn'd from their Evil ways: And he repented of the Evil that he said he would do unto them, and did it not.*

I therefore humbly beseech the God of all Grace, to kindle a most Ardent Zeal for his Ways in every one of us, and make us indeed an *Holy People*; that the *Holy God* may (with Honour) save and defend us, as *his People*, and *his Inheritance*; and continue to deliver us (as he lately did) *with a Mighty Hand.*

And in order to the *Repose and Renown* of these Kingdoms: May it please Almighty Goodness to prosper His Majesty's Forces by Sea and Land, in the Just-defence of all that's dear to us. May his *Great Affairs* every where be favoured with the Divine Blessing.

And above all, may it please God to preserve his *Royal Person*, the *Breath of our Nostrils*: That under his shade we may continue to breathe our Free Na-
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tive-air. Free, I say, from all the *Fogs and Plagues of the Spiritual Egypt*. That being blest with the *Cherishing Beams of the Holy Gospel*, we may rejoice in the Experience of God's Mercy here, and in the Hope of a perfect Enjoyment of it for ever.

Now to him that is able to Save and Defend us, and to do more for us than we can ask or think : To Him be Worship and Praise, Dominion and Obedience ascribed for ever and ever. Amen.

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